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SUBJECT: MOLDOVA ELECTIONS GIVE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY TO
COMMUNISTS

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Parliamentary elections in Moldova have yielded a bare majority nationwide for the Party of Communists (PCRM). Depending upon the methodology used for calculating the distribution of parliamentary seats, it appears that the PCRM has won 60-61 seats of 101 in Parliament. With 61 seats the PCRM would narrowly achieve the required three-fifths of Members of Parliament (MPs) needed to elect a president. Three other parties reached the six percent threshold for representation in Parliament: the Liberal Party (PL), the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM), and the Moldova Noastra Alliance (AMN). Nearly 400 OSCE/ODIHR observers and 14 Embassy monitoring teams reported that, despite a general business-like attitude and normalcy in most polling stations, there were also reports of distribution of favors by the PCRM, intimidated voters, inaccurate voter lists, passive political-party polling-station observers, and misuse of administrative resources. End Summary.

Communists Win a Majority

¶2. (SBU) On Monday morning, Moldovans awoke to the news that the PCRM would continue to rule as the dominant party for another four years. With 97 percent of total votes counted, the PCRM has 49.94 percent of the vote, and thus apparently 60 seats and possibly the 61 seats in Parliament needed to select the President (and the speaker of Parliament) without needing a coalition partner. It appears that the Liberal Party (PL), with 12.75 percent of the vote, will have 15 seats. The Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM) with 12.26 percent of the vote, will have 14 seats, and the Moldova Noastra Alliance (AMN), with 9.82 percent of the vote, will have 11 seats. The question of opposition parties needing to coalesce is no longer at issue as the Party of Communists predominates, though the PCRM's majority is so tenuous, they will likely seek support from MPs on opposition lists.

¶3. (SBU) Embassy observers, who travelled throughout the country on Sunday to monitor the voting process in villages, observed a range of problems. A common problem at polling stations country-wide was inaccurate voter lists. Local authorities failed to verify that the lists compiled at the national level were correct, resulting in situations where high numbers of voters turned out, many of whom were returned migrants, but were not on the list. Other lists were inflated and had not been updated to account for deaths and permanent changes of address. Another area of common concern was the handling of the mobile ballot box. In one case, the mobile box was brought to voters who had not requested it and did not intend to vote. In other situations, applications for mobile voting came in orally, and not in written format, making the legitimacy of the requests difficult to verify. Different polling stations used different interpretations of the rules regarding requests for mobile ballots. Not all mobile boxes posed problems; many polling stations took care to have party observers follow the mobile box and ensure compliance.

14. (SBU) Also at issue was the opaque process of counting votes at District Election Commissions (DEC), from where numbers were then electronically transmitted to the Central Election Commission (CEC), despite CEC promises to create the necessary transparency at all levels. Observers at some DEC headquarters were not permitted to watch as local-level votes were being entered into computers, although the CEC had promised that such observation would be allowed. These votes were not publicly posted at the DEC level in many cases, though Post and international election observers had asked the CEC to display these results at every level of the process. Access to local level data at the district and national levels was critical to ensure that all polling stations' data were accurately reflected in the totals.

15. (SBU) There were isolated cases of intimidation on elections day, some involving police presence. Observers noted in a few cases that police had either blocked the entrance to the polling station or were present inside while voting was taking place, a clear violation of the regulations. Observers reported cases of voters who had believed that hidden cameras would be placed in the booths, leaving those voters with the perception that theirs was not a secret vote. In one case an embassy observer reported a video camera mounted on a tripod aimed right at the ballot box, creating an intimidating effect, though officials assured the camera was not turned on.

16. (SBU) We heard reports of political-party volunteer observers who were threatened with job losses or unidentified consequences if they showed up at polling stations on Sunday. In one village of 134 pensioner voters, it was reported that the PCRM told them to deliver all 134 votes, or face the loss of their pensions. The Communists offered not only threats but inducements. One embassy observer noted Communist officials providing goodies in an "I voted

Communist" plastic shopping bag to voters as they exited church services.

Problems for Corjova and Residents of Transnistria

17. (SBU) Transnistrian (TN) authorities prevented the holding of elections in Corjova and blocked access for many Transnistrian residents who wished to participate in the Moldovan elections. At approximately 6:30 A.M. Transnistrian authorities blocked the roads leading in and out of Corjova, and took up positions around the building designated as a polling station. The election authorities had arrived early to set up, and were inside the building. Several hundred irregulars, belonging to the Transnistrian Cossack unit, supported by other goons and toughs all wearing red and green Transnistrian armbands, surrounded the building joined by TN nationalists carrying signs, waving flags and chanting slogans. No one wishing to vote would dare brave such a crowd. Transnistrian militia carried away the polling box, and eventually the CEC declared the polling station in Corjova to be officially closed. Residents of Corjova were given permission to vote in the nearby villages of Cocieri or Ustia.

18. (SBU) No polling stations were set up in areas controlled by the Transnistrian authorities, but arrangements were made for residents of Transnistria to vote at ten polling stations in GOM-controlled villages. Those desiring to vote faced some daunting challenges to travel to these villages. Transnistrian authorities blocked certain segments of road, rendering access impossible. Voters who intended to travel in a special bus had their bus boarded by TN authorities, and rather than surrender their documents, were forced to disassemble. Some succeeded in reaching Moldovan villages in private cars; many others were forced to walk. An Embassy observer spoke with one young couple from Grigoriopol who, together with their two-year-old son had trekked some 10-15 kilometers in order to participate in the elections. Data collected on elections day suggested that some 4,000 Transnistrian residents succeeded in casting their votes.

Comment

19. (SBU) The last poll taken during the elections campaign had the PCRM polling at about 36 percent. There are concerns about the

sudden leap from last week's polling data to today's 50 percent showing at the ballot box. This could have been the result of governmental threats and intimidation. Or, it could have been the result of good PCRM campaigning. We think the jump from 36 to 50 percent probably came as a result of both intimidation and threats and a well-managed PCRM campaign.

¶10. (SBU) The PCRM also has a support base of voters who believed that voting for the PCRM was the best way to ensure continued receipt of pensions and salaries. Many Moldovan voters seemed to have voted for stability and for the party they believed could best deliver results.

¶11. (SBU) The feeling in Chisinau is not one of celebration. Several Moldovans in town have pointed out that the results conveniently matched the number of votes in Parliament that would allow the Party of Communists to select a President and maintain control of Parliament. Some of our educated, white-collar FSNs have expressed disgust over the results. PLDM party leader Vlad Filat has publicly rejected the results; and the think tank Idis Viitorul has called for repeat elections.

CHAUDHRY